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MAY 12 1976

L. Joe Deal, Assistant Director
Division of Safety, Standards and
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BIKINI (CROSSROADS) SHIPS

In recent years a number of scientists have expressed concern regarding the potential ecological impact of the ships which lie at the bottom of Bikini Lagoon. These ships, a variety of naval vessels in full combat-ready condition, were sunk during Operation Crossroads in 1946 and have since remained undisturbed, although some of them were visited by a motion picture production crew in 1973.

Officials of the Trust Territory administration have expressed concern as have the people of Bikini. In March 1976, during a visit to Bikini by the United Nations Visiting Mission, a spokesman for the People of Bikini made a direct request that the ships be removed from their Lagoon. During the same visit, Mr. George Allen, attorney of record for the People of Bikini, signified his intention to pursue the possibility of a commercial salvage operation, with the People of Bikini as beneficiaries.

Although the locations of the Bikini ships are fairly well known, little is known about their condition, the desirability from an environmental standpoint of salvage, or the probable timing of a potential release of the contents (fuel, munitions, etc.) to the atoll environment. There appears to be at least some evidence (from Truk Lagoon) that sunken wrecks can be environmentally beneficial, or at least that leaving them in place may represent the lesser of the evils.

This letter is occasioned by the potential availability, in the Marshall Islands, of the capability to make a condition survey of the Bikini ships. ERDA's Mid-Pacific Marine Laboratory at Enewetak is planning for the use during July and August, 1977, of a small research submersible. This submersible, supported by ERDA's Marshall Islands Research

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FOLDER BIKINI-MISC CORRESP/RRS
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Vessel, the R. V. Liktañur, could be made available at Bikini for approximately two weeks commencing approximately August 21, 1976. Its capability is described in the enclosure to this letter.

It is contemplated that the agency using the submersible at Bikini would reimburse ERDA at the rate of \$1500/day for the use of the Research Vessel and \$1000/day for the use of the submersible. That agency would also be expected to assume a pro-rata share of the modest mobilization costs (estimated share: less than \$5000).

It would appear to be in the U. S. Government interest to take advantage of the above-mentioned opportunity. The assistance of your office is requested to identify the agency or agencies which might wish to conduct the suggested condition survey, in order that timely planning may be initiated.


Roger Ray, Assistant Manager
for Environment & Safety

Enclosure:
Article

cc: W. O. Forster, DBER,
ERDA/HQ, w/o encl.

bcc: W. J. Stanley, Dir.,
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S. V. Smith, MPML,
Hawaii, w/o encl.

